

## Transcription: Allen Clark

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*Today is Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010. My name is James Crabtree and I'll be interviewing Mr. Allen Clark. This interview is being done by phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Clark is at his home in Dallas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us. I guess usually the first question I ask when we do one of these interviews is just to tell us a little bit about your boyhood and your life before you went in the military.*

**Allen Clark:** Sure, my father was an Army officer. My father had attended North Texas Agricultural College, which is now UTA. Kind of interesting I think from my father's standpoint, he had been battalion sergeant major of the Army ROTC program at the school, and it was only a two-year school at the time. They had wanted to make my father an officer in the Corps of cadets there, but as my father told me, he had been raised in very, very austere and limited financial situation in his family, and he said I couldn't even accept an officer position because that would have meant I would've had to buy these boots and whatever else would be the accoutrements or whatever of the Officer Corps. He told me one time that I couldn't even afford that, so I had to just remain battalion sergeant major, which I thought was interesting from his standpoint, but he always had an interest in the military. He was a very patriotic young Texan. He married a woman from Mission, Texas, who was Hispanic by heritage. Her father was Spaniard and had migrated to Mexico in the early 1900s with his other single brother, and they both came to Texas in the early 1900s, and my maternal grandmother lived in Matamoros, and so my maternal grandfather I guess moved to Matamoros, they married, then moved to Texas, and it's kind of interesting in Texas life and history and background, they had silent movies as we all know historically. Well, my grandfather ran, managed a silent movie theater and my grandmother played the piano. So it's kind of an interesting background there. My father unfortunately had become an orphan by age two or three. His father was killed in a railroad accident. He worked for the railroad. And then his mother died in the influenza epidemic which I think was about 1918, which killed of course thousands of Texans as well as Americans and people worldwide. So he had a very, he was raised by his grandmother until she died, etc., but this all brings to bear my father and mother being people of rather limited means, but getting married together and being committed to service. My mother was a nurse and my father was a businessman until he was called up immediately after, well six months or so after Pearl Harbor Day in 1942 and two months after I was born. So my father's term of service was at Fort Sam Houston during World War II, and also in Dallas at something called the 8<sup>th</sup> Service Command. My father told me that he had volunteered twice for World War II duty but he never was called up, so he transferred into what's called counterintelligence corps and served in Little Rock, Arkansas. And then he was transferred to Japan in 1948, three years after the war, for what's called the army of occupation, so my sister then two, and myself and my mother travelled by train from Mission, Texas, all the way to Seattle, Washington to wait our what's called debarkation date, or embarkation I guess it was, whatever it is. And we went to Japan on an Army troop ship. We went across the northern Pacific Ocean in 1949, and I do recall as a 7-year-old, let's see, a 6-year-old, 6-1/2 year old, that it was an extraordinarily severe weather trip because we all got sea sick and I remember the ship tossing back and forth in the storms of the North Pacific. It was just really amazing how tough that trip was. We lived in Japan for three years and lived in a town called Sendai which is up in northern Japan, and we had divisions that were stationed there after the occupation, so Sendai they had a camp that was called Camp Shimblefenick, and as I have a recollection, the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was based there, and then

we lived in a housing area called Kowachi Track. I don't know how to spell it, but that's where it was and we had our own little school there. There were four kids in the high school graduating class. So I was raised an Army brat, and my father was counterintelligence corps. We moved back to Washington D.C. and of course near the center of power, near the Pentagon. My father was in military district of Washington as a field grade officer and I began to be encouraged by my parents to go to West Point. I came up with it on my own, but wanted to go to West Point all along. We were in Japan when the Korean War broke out in 1950, and again my father didn't go immediately, but a lot of my friends' parents went. I mean it was like war time conditions because we were always concerned that maybe the bases in Japan would be bombed, especially after the Chinese came into the war. So anyway, I had wanted to go to West Point my whole life. Dad finally went to Korea toward the end of the war, served a 16- month tour there, and so I kept preparing myself in high school to go to the military academy at West Point.

*Do you remember as a child even thinking that you wanted to be in the military?*

**Allen Clark:** Oh yeah, well being around the bases of course and the Army posts, and all my father's friends. We didn't really know very many civilians. All our friends were military, and I met a lot of West Pointers at an early age, and I was always impressed by them. As all good Army brats do, we collect Army patches, and so one day I picked up the Army patch for West Point and asked my dad what it was. I liked to try to identify them and know what they were, and he said, he told me West Point. I guess I was about 7 or 8. So that kind of planted the seed in my mind to become an officer through that avenue, and I really kind of had tunnel vision. That's all that I ever really wanted to do was to go to West Point beginning about age 8 I would say.

*Tell us a little bit sir about when you finally got your appointment how you were able to get your appointment.*

**Allen Clark:** Well it was very interesting. I had gone to a Catholic high school in Washington, D.C., and a lot of Army brats that were classmates of mine. My father was due to go overseas, and one of the places that he might have gone was a base up in Canada believe it or not that I've never been able to find very much about, and I'd done some research on it, but he was being considered to be the commanding officer of the base, a U.S. base in Canada. He showed me the picture of it. It was totally surrounded by snow so it was an isolated place. The other options were perhaps in Germany or Japan again I suppose, and those bases always had high schools typically with American teachers that would be members of the Department of Defense as employees, and we were very concerned that those schools having remembered there were only four in the graduating class back in Sendai in 1949-50, that I might not be prepared academically very well to go to West Point and pass the exams and all. So my dad got me admitted to Philips Exeter Academy which is a private school founded in 1783 up in Exeter, New Hampshire.

*That's a very prestigious school, too.*

**Allen Clark:** Well I got admitted for junior year there, and beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I began literally walking the halls of Congress. My high school was four blocks north of the capitol building on North Capitol Street. I mean I could leave class at 3:30 and get down to the Congress and go in and introduce myself to people and try to get a nomination to West Point. My father was a very wise man. He had been stationed in Little Rock, Arkansas, and he retained residency in Arkansas, which meant I had a Congressman and two senators from there, and my mother maintained residency in Mission, Texas which is Hidalgo County next to McAllen,

Edinburg and so forth, and one mile from the Mexican border. The Rio Grande River passes literally next to Mission, Texas. And so I had six nomination opportunities. So the Arkansas Congressman was one of the possibilities, so I came home on Christmas leave my 11<sup>th</sup> grade junior year of high school from Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, was at home in Arlington, Texas, and the Congressman from Little Rock named Brooks Hayes was a very, very powerful Congressman. That really didn't matter to me. I mean he still had the same number of nominations. But he was Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee as I understand it, and he called me at 5 o'clock on Christmas Eve 1958, and I'm in my junior year, mind you, 16 years old, and he said Allen, I have a principal nomination for you for West Point. I was just shocked. Here I am a year before I need to get it, and I said Congressman, I don't need it until next year. He said Allen, I am a lame duck Congressman. I was beaten in the Democratic primary in Arkansas whenever that was that year, and he says I leave office in about 10 days when the new Congress comes in, and I'm filling up all my slots. I have three slots for the academy for class of '63. I'd like to give you one of those three. I said gosh, and I just didn't know what to say. He said look, why don't you just accept my nomination, go through the process to get admitted to the academy, and if you don't make it this year, say wow, we just chalked it up to experience and you chalked it up to knowing how the system works and preparation, and if you get in, you can make a decision as to whether you want to go to school a year early. I said well that makes sense. Somehow we just, it was incredible to me, number one getting it after all these years, number two, getting it a year early. So I go back to Exeter Academy for the second half of my junior year in high school. In the spring of 1959, there was something known as the Asiatic flu that came through the country, and I got the Asiatic flu, and I was literally in the school infirmary inpatient at Exeter Academy when I had to literally get up out of bed and go to Boston Army Base to take my entrance exams for West Point. We were all in one great big, huge warehouse where they had literally cots where we stayed for three days because back then you took all the tests together. They gave you a physical ability test, they gave you your college board exams, and they had a psychiatrist check you out, so just kind of a total package and all the kids from the northeast were in that exam. And I passed the psychiatric exam obviously. I still remember that psychiatrist. I took the boards and did relatively well and maintained at least a minimum I presume on the physical ability test, literally went back to school on I guess a Saturday, and went back in the infirmary. I had no expectation whatsoever that I could possibly be admitted. But May 1<sup>st</sup>, junior year, I get a letter saying I've been appointed to the academy. I said oh my gosh, now I've got to make a decision. So mom and dad were living in Arlington, Virginia, and I said well, dad said well Allen, you're prepared academically, you have all the high school credit hours, you made good grades, they admitted you, why don't you go ahead and go? I said well OK, I guess so. So at age 17 on June 20<sup>th</sup>, I entered West Point class of '63 as the youngest man apparently of 760. I know when I graduated 504, I was the youngest graduate, and if 256 or whatever that didn't make to the academy, if anybody was younger than I, I don't know about it. But I went ahead and went in and began my cadet life.

*Tell us a little bit then what your first thoughts were of West Point. Was it what you had expected when you got there?*

**Allen Clark:** Well I was probably well prepared to be a cadet. I really had had no "freedoms" as say a senior. You know, seniors are BMOC, big men on campus and all, and I had not had that experience. I was raised in a very controlled, disciplined environment with my parents, my father being a rather austere, strict disciplinarian with love, as with my mother, and so I was prepared to "accept" the disciplinary system without a problem. So I was a "very good" cadet. I took everything very seriously. I did not err, I did not stray, I just played the game as you call it

to be a cadet at West Point. I made it through beast barracks just fine. Interesting sidelight to that beast barracks story is about the fifth week or so, by this time after this time my parents had been moved to Hawaii, so they lived there, and I said why am I putting up with this when I could be back going to maybe Punahou High School or something in Honolulu, and going down to the beach after school every day and learning to surf and everything? Why am I putting up with this cadet life? So I decided that I would resign and so I, I don't know how it worked. I didn't go through my squad leader or platoon leader, I went for some reason and got straight to the company commander and I walked into the company commander's office. Now the company, we had six new cadet companies at West Point, so and I think four platoons per company, so we had like 100 guys per I don't know, well 150 guys per company, whatever. And I walk in and I introduce myself to the company commander reporting as ordered, new cadet Clark. The company commander says to me, Mr. Clark, I know you. I mean you talk about another shock. OK, here I am at cold, cruel, austere West Point where everything is so down to the minute planning and just totally disciplined and cold emotionally, and he says yes Mr. Clark, he says I'm from McAllen. McAllen is the big town next door to Mission. He says my mother sent me the article from the paper that you were being admitted, that you were coming up to the academy, so I knew you were coming. And his name was Nick Roe, James N. Roe, class of 1960 at West Point. So he literally talked me out of resigning. I mean you know, the other aspect to so much of my life really leads into the spiritual dimension. I mean here this young guy is ready to get out, if Nick Roe had not been the company commander, my guess is I might have resigned from the academy and never had my West Point life and graduation and everything that entailed, plus my military career, which might have been better for me as it turns out. I might have been drafted anyway of course. But here Nick Roe is placed in my path, you know, there's 500 first classmen, he's a company commander of my company where I walk in the door, he is from my mother's home county.

*And for the listeners, Nick Roe is an American hero and there's a high school named for him down there I believe.*

**Allen Clark:** Yes, well I'll tell you a little bit more about Nick as we proceed. Anyway Nick said Allen, or Mr. Clark, things change in about three weeks, we start academics, football season starts, and West Point becomes a lot better for you than being a plebe in beast barracks at West Point. So anyway, for whatever amount of conversation it was, I said fine. So he convinced me. So I go back, you know, and I go finish beast barracks and get into the regular cadet year, and he was right. Our first football game of the year I was an usher in the stands and we beat I think Boston College 40 to nothing. We had great teams back then. So anyway, I end up being in Nick Roe's company, OK, also. Maybe he asked to get me in his company. Now I rarely ever talked to Nick Roe and he never had any personal contact with me at all, but I always knew he was there. It's kind of like big brother. And I was a good plebe, so it meant I went on what's called tables of senior cadet staffs, like the regimental commander staff would have a table and the brigade staff would have a table, and I was placed on those tables as a plebe to take care of the food, you know, and the seconds and that sort of stuff, and so I must have been decent because I was efficient, and so I was on a regimental commander's table for about six weeks during plebe year, and the brigade commander's table for about six weeks. Now that's a big honor if you ask me. Anyway the brigade commander was Charlie Oddstadt from Highland Park High School in Dallas, Texas. That year '59 to '60, the brigade commander of the midshipmen at Naval Academy plus the first captain of the cadet corps at West Point were both from Highland Park High School, so it was a very interesting year and there was like a write-up I think in Life magazine about that. But anyway, so I was on Charlie Oddstadt's table, so that year I was there, I made really good grades as a plebe. I'd been very well prepared academically and I

just kind of suffered in silence everything and just put up with everything, and I was always running kind of scared because I was so young and I felt then mature, but as it turns out, I probably did better in the cadet system than some of the people that were a year or two of college and at least high school because they kind of had freedom and so to be confined in the discipline system was really tough on them. Now let me digress with Nick a moment and tell some history about him because it's very interesting as it relates if I may.

*Sure. Absolutely, yes sir.*

**Allen Clark:** Well Nick Roe went and was assigned to Special Forces, the Green Beret's in Vietnam, and I think it was October of '63, Nick Roe was down to what's called the Umin Forest down in the Delta, but Nick had grown up in McAllen, Texas and there is a high school named for him there. I spoke at that high school three years ago by the way, and he was captured on a patrol with Rocky Versace and another Special Forces sergeant, and Nick Roe ended up having been in captivity for 63 months. Now on New Years' Eve 1968, Nick Roe who had been isolated in what they called a tiger cage for all that time with no contact with any other Americans for 63 months was being moved to another camp, because some American helicopters were doing a raid down in that area. As he was moving out, he saw an American helicopter and he, the story is not exactly clear because I saw Nick later on, but they apparently knocked out whatever, his guard, and he was wearing black pajamas which is the Viet Cong outfit, and a chopper, an American chopper was coming down and was about to hit him, but he had a beard so that at the last moment, the gunners told the pilot veer up, it's an American, because the Vietnamese don't grow beards, so they veered up, they came back and they picked him up and so he escaped. Nick eventually ran for office for state comptroller of Texas against Bob Bullock in 1974. He'd been recruited personally by John Connolly to run for comptroller of Texas. And then he went back on active duty when he lost that race, and started the SEER course, the Survival Escape Resistance and Evasion or however the terminology goes up in Fort Bragg, so he's a real decided hero in the Special Forces community and in the American military community, and in 1989 he was in the advisory group to the Philippine Army as a full colonel and he was fascinated by a supposed Communist who's still in jail here in 2010 in the Philippine. But for Nick Roe, I mean for me I would not have probably wouldn't have stayed in the academy and therefore graduated if it hadn't been for Nick Roe.

*That's a great story. Well sir, so you are at the academy. At that point I guess Vietnam wasn't something that was much thought of. Had you already chosen at some point while you were at the academy that you wanted to be an infantry officer?*

**Allen Clark:** No, I became an engineer officer. I always wanted to be an engineer officer actually. We'll get to that CIB and so forth. My mother on that ship trip, you know, American transport over to Japan in '49, I have a recollection that she played bridge with three young Army lieutenants, and they were all West Pointer's, and I never forgot that. Back when I decided I was going to go to West Point a year or two later, she reminded me, remember those three young officers that you thought were so sharp, those were West Point graduates. Well wow, OK. So and I believe maybe she said they were engineers or whatever. But I had remembered that Robert E. Lee and Douglas McArthur had been engineers and so forth, and I thought well maybe I should be an engineer. So I kind of always decided that was gonna be my branch. So while I was at the academy, I did fairly well academically. My big claim to fame at the academy was that I got, I had been a debater in high school for one year and then my third year at West Point I became a member of the debate team and for two years I traveled extensively. I mean I went to so many debate tournaments it's amazing, like every other

weekend I was gone from the academy, like Friday morning missing classes and going to debate tournaments around the country, and I ended up receiving one of the two designations at the end of senior year for the best debater in the senior class of 1963. So the Swiss consul would come up from New York every spring for June week as we called it and present a special gift, a watch to the best two debaters, and so I was selected for that, and I was also the outstanding Spanish language student in the class, so I have this incredibly beautiful cowhide-covered book by Martine Fiero, who was a writer in Argentina, and so it was a gift from the Chief of Staff of the Argentina Army presented to me by the Dean of Students at West Point, so I had two awards when I graduated. But I always kind of ran scared. I did reasonably well. I mean I became a platoon leader lieutenant, you know, no big deal, but I always, I just adjusted to the system, I had a great time as a debater, and nobody ever likes being at West Point. I think we like being from West Point and it looks good on your resume, but I don't think any of us "like" being there, but we surely liked and appreciated, respect what we have as a result of that, what we were, what we survived, what we made it through, and especially the relationships. My personal relationships today are just totally enmeshed in my West Point Society of North Texas that's up here in Dallas. My friendships there, my classmates I keep in touch with, different things. I have a classmate that's working with some veterans that have PTSD up in Washington state. He's asked for a copy of my book that I eventually wrote a few years ago called Wounded Soldier, Healing Warrior. He's getting them for the members of the board so they can hear my story and so forth. But overall, West Point was an incredibly wonderful, fascinating experience in hindsight, and I got out in '63 as a Corps of Engineers officer.

*So where did you go to first when you graduated?*

**Allen Clark:** I was going with a woman that I had planned on marrying when I graduated. As it turns out, we broke up within our first two months of service, and I had signed up for Fort Hood, Texas back in the spring. At the time I was single, planning on remaining single. I wasn't planning on getting married necessarily when I chose my post, and I decided to go to Fort Hood because that was midway between the University of Texas sororities and Baylor University sorority, and I figured I could get to both those places within 40 or 50-mile drive, and that's how I intended to spend my weekends. As it turns out on the that two-month graduation leave, I met a woman up here in Dallas that I married, and so we got married in Dallas but I had been stationed in the 17<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division based at Fort Hood. I was engaged, then I went away, became engaged very quickly three weeks, whirlwind engagement and romance, and then I went to Fort Belvoir, Texas, which is the engineer basic course for officers, for two months. And then I came back for six days and the engineer battalion along with the entire division went to Germany in the fall of 1963 for one month on what's called Operation Big Lift. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division here at Fort Hood was what was called a back-up reserve in case the Russians attacked Germany. We had what was called prepositioned equipment that was based over in storage facilities in Germany where there were actual motor pools that were run by 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division people in Germany, so we took 17,000 men in 24 hours from Fort Hood in October of 1963 to Germany and we were there for maneuvers for one month. Now it was more a political plan and ploy because if the Germans actually were attacked by Soviet Russia, if Russia came across that border with their tanks, I mean we wouldn't have had time to get 17,000 men there. I mean I think Germany would have capitulated and they would've been into France and so forth. But anyway, politically it made sense and it gave people a sense of security. So anyway we were there for a month, and then I became a platoon leader in an engineer company and eventually became executive officer of an engineer company at Fort Hood. I was there at Fort Hood when we came back from Big Lift and was going through the conference of one of the recreation halls and saw the TV when they announced that President

Kennedy had been killed and then I was in Dallas the following Sunday at a church service with my fiancé when the priest came in and said we really have had a horrible thing happen in Dallas again. The alleged murderer of John F. Kennedy has been killed himself in downtown Dallas at the police headquarters. So I was firsthand here in Texas when those things happened in 1963. I eventually ended up as a first lieutenant and I was asked to be, I was ordered to be the Operations Officer of the Engineer Battalion. We had begun building up Vietnam in '64-'65, and we started sending engineer construction battalions to Vietnam in '64-'65, and all the majors had been cleaned out of all the engineer battalions in the United States to go with those construction battalions to begin building bases like Komron Bay and the air bases as I understand it over in Vietnam, so all the majors were gone, so they started moving up to lieutenants. So I was 21 when I became, let me see, I was 22 and at first lieutenant when I became put in a major slot to run the operations and training for an entire 800-man engineer battalion, which was a great honor for me and great experience for me, a few months later I was interviewed to become a general's aide. There were seven generals at Fort Hood and I eventually ended up being what's called the junior aide d'camp to the major general commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division, so I moved over for nine months to that position.

*Then when was it ultimately sir that you got to Vietnam?*

**Allen Clark:** Well, that was an interesting personal story. My first wife, Jackie McAdams, with whom I have a very, very good relationship today I must add, we had a 30-year marriage, she did not take to military life as is the case with many of our wives. They don't like the danger of the military. They don't like the moving around. Just the whole batch of what we go through in the military in our commitment, wanted me to resign. Well I could not resign without having gone to Vietnam. I had a chance to not go to Vietnam. I transferred to military intelligence and thought I would get in a foreign area, a specialty program which was embassy work and diplomatic work and so forth, and thought that would keep me from going to 'Nam and would also help her have a different kind of a life than a line officer as it was in the combat arms, and she might consent to staying in the military. Well, a general that was the assistant division commander asked me to go to Korea as his general's aide, and I would've gone to Korea for about a 13-month tour of whatever it was at the time, and avoided Vietnam service, but I told him very kindly with respect that I appreciated the confidence that reflected in me, but that I had to go to Vietnam. So I volunteered for Vietnam and didn't my tell my then wife and created significant problems once I came back wounded of course. But I did go to Vietnam and had gone to Fort Haliford, Maryland which was closed under the BRAC program, the Base Realignment and Closing Act, and became, was trained to be a prisoner interrogator. Being a debater, I guess they felt I could ask good questions and so forth, so I was trained as an interrogator and assigned as an interrogator in a military intelligence detachment in Vietnam on August 1<sup>st</sup>, I left the country, the United States, to go there in 1966. So I'd been in the Army about three years. I had just been promoted to captain after three years of service, and I report in, and there are no prisoners to interrogate. So I became motor pool officer which all of us hated to be, and spent my afternoons on the beach at Natrang, which is the Riviera of South Vietnam, and one day I was on an airplane with a lieutenant colonel who was a Special Forces officers commanding the Green Berets in the central highlands of Vietnam, what's called Two Corps, and we were talking about my lack of professional satisfaction in my job. He said well I need an S2 in one of my Special Forces B teams, in a place called Ban Me Thuot up in the central highlands, so would you want to consider transferring? Well, once again James, as it turns out, my executive officer at my MI detachment had been my professor of civil engineering at West Point, so when I go in, he knows me, and he says Allen, if that's what you want to do, I'll grease the skids, so I was transferred to Special Forces in about a week or so. And so I transfer in and

I'm fully expecting there at Nhatrang Special Forces Camp headquarters in Vietnam to be assigned, I don't get assigned for about a week. I'm sitting around, I'm doing rifle qualification, marksmanship training and different things, and this old sergeant, E8 master sergeant, really he looked like he'd have been Spanish American War he looked so old, comes, I ask him what's going on? He says captain, your orders have been changed. Your file is in a safe so the Vietnamese can't get to it in our offices here and you've been assigned to a secret operation. And I can't find out once again for several days what it is. I eventually pinned down a major. He says your assignment is going to be espionage against Cambodia. Well about '66, there had been a movie or two about James Bond, and so that's what dances in my mind, James Bond and going to cocktail parties, drinking martinis or whatever and having a good time, in a modest way. But as it turns out, the detachment ended up being a brand new operation to collect intelligence in Cambodia through infiltration by agents that we would hire either Montanyards or Cambodians or business people or whatever along the border, and we would place bases along the border at aide camps, which were the 12-man Special Forces camps, about 100 of them in Vietnam, and with 12 Americans and whatever support they needed, and we'd set up an operation at each camp and hire people and put 'em on our payroll, pay 'em cash of course, go across the border, collect intelligence with the Communists, because Cambodia was a privileged sanctuary as Pakistan is today 2010, in southwest Asia where the Taliban had been, Pakistan today, and Al Kaida and go across and attack in Afghanistan, come back, and they would do the same thing out of Cambodia so we wanted to find out where the Communist bases were, etc., and collect intelligence. And so I was assigned to that. Originally I was like almost the first officer assigned to that group and was like S1, S2, S3, and S4, took all the staff positions. Slowly more captains came in and I eventually became a training officer. I was ordered to debrief a defector from the Cambodian Army. His name was Inchin Hai Lam. He was a defector from Cambodia and I debriefed him for a month and I got tactical intelligence from him. His mother had been, he told me his mother had been the royal housekeeper on the palace grounds in Cambodia for the president or whatever, Siajnouk in Cambodia, and he had been disenchanted with Communism and defected to the United States and we got what's called operational intelligence on him. So I spent a month debriefing him. I have a follow-up to that story. You can either cover it now or later.

*Sure, it's up to you sir.*

**Allen Clark:** Well let's cover it now. I spent a month with him and then I went on to another assignment which we can get back to, and he remained in our detachment B57 it was called, operating Special Forces, he remained as an agent for us and I went on to some other things. After I was wounded later on, I heard about a murder of Inchin Hai Lam literally on the front pages of the New York Times magazine about 1968 or so. My father sent me an article after I had come back to the United States, and it said Inchin Hai Lam had been murdered. Well golly, my dad wrote on the article, did you know him? I said yeah I knew him. I spent a month of my life with him. So I basically forgot about it. And then in 1970, a report came out on the front page of the New York Times which is very interesting and which I elaborate on in my book again, my autobiography, and it said that an Army Special Forces captain named Captain John McCarthy had been convicted of murdering Inchin Hai Lam back in October of 1968, meaning a full year after I had left Inchin Hai Lam and our involvement with each other, and that he was going to go to Fort Levinworth Prison. Or he was on trial I guess, he was on trial. So I contacted my father who contacted the judge advocate general's department and the attorney for McCarthy, the defense attorney, came to see me when I was at SMU in 1970, and came to my home and I told him about Inchin Hai Lam what I knew about him because the article said that the United States had been running an operation called Operation Cherry, which I had named in



Vietnam for my operation, and it was to go into Cambodia and that it was apparently set up to assassinate Siajnouk, so it had not been the mission of my unit when I was in it in '66-'67 to assassinate Siajnouk, not that I was aware of. We were always compartmentalized of course, but I talked to the defense attorney and as it turns out, McCarthy was eventually convicted and did go to Levinworth for 15 months but was released and went back on active duty for a while and amazingly enough I'm still, McCarthy heard about my book and contacted me about two years ago, so we've been in contact about Inchin, and so it's a very interesting story. McCarthy thinks that Inchin Hai Lam was a triple agent, that he was sent by Siajnouk to infiltrate us, and he had been to Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow as a young man, had been trained there; he had been to Peking, he spoke seven languages, he was a highly intelligent guy, slight physically but very smart, and that he might have been a Soviet plant and that he might also have been a plant called the Khmer Serei, the \_\_\_ mayors who were a lot of, we recruited a lot of the Khmer Serei who hated Siajnouk and Communism, to be our agents to go into Cambodia. So McCarthy thinks he might have been a triple agent, so there were a lot of people that wanted to get rid of him. Be that as it may, that kind of closes the loop on that story.

*McCarthy admitted that he killed him?*

**Allen Clark:** Well, McCarthy maintains to this date, and I have to believe him obviously, is that he did not commit the murder, OK, period. Someone else did. He's not sure who did, but he maintains that he was not the murderer. I accept that. Highly controversial. When a case comes on the front page of the New York Times, it's a highly controversial story and they called it the double agent murder case for B57, and about 1970 or so there was another double agent murder case out of B57 where some of the officers involved with B57 were under trial and Special Forces were deep sixing another supposed double agent and they never found that body, and then the Special Forces commanding officer, a Colonel Rheault, was relieved from his command in Vietnam because of that second double agent murder case. I have learned a lot about that original Inchin Hai Lam murder case and John McCarthy has a web site today and different things and he's spoken to me in very much detail about that murder case that I didn't know about when I wrote my book four years ago, but I accept his rendition of how the death of Inchin Hai Lam and I'm prepared to accept that, period. I have no further comments about that.

*Sure.*

**Allen Clark:** I went on, my commanding officer asked me to set up an operation with hiring some of these Khmer Serei, and training them for infiltration missions into Cambodia, so for about three months I was involved with that and I literally lived in a safe house in downtown Saigon with three Cambodians, trained them in mapping techniques, patrolling techniques, getting through the jungle techniques, infiltration techniques, put North Vietnamese Army uniforms on them with North Vietnamese Army ID cards, sanitized equipment and weapons and so forth, dropped them in a very, very heavy, heavy triple canopy jungle in Vietnam, and I had to pick them up within 48 hours. They became, an enemy patrol passed within about 20 or 25 feet of them at night, and two of the three refused to go on another mission. They said this is too dangerous. They liked the money, but they didn't like the danger. So I took the one that was about 22, he was the oldest of the three, and trained another man with him, put him in a second time at what's called the tri-border point where Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia come together, and they, I had to pick them up within 24 hours. So basically that mission was aborted and was unsuccessful, but I lived with those people for three months and basically was their agent handler as it's called. Then I was sent to Dak-to. I knew that area really well, so east of the tri-border point was a Special Forces camp called Dak-to, Special Forces A-244, the second core area, and

I was up there from March until June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1967, attempting to set up agent nets which was highly unsuccessful also because it was such a heavy, triple canopy jungle and there was no reason why anybody should be in that jungle because they'd all been moved from Montanyard villages into protected camps by the South Vietnamese Army and Army Special Forces, and it was really hard to get any agents to go into those areas. So I tried to no avail to get agents to go, and I think maybe I had one agent that went out, but they were all scared. And then a North Vietnamese Army battalion moved into the area, and in the second week of June 1967, ambushed one of our Special Forces patrols. Two out of three Americans were killed. The rest escaped and evaded. One American came back in the camp very highly shook up. Another group of Army Special Forces led Montanyards went out and all four Americans apparently were killed. So the enemy was moving in on our camp in mid-June 1967, creating to say the least a significant amount of danger for all of us.

*During the time that you were there in Vietnam, did you have much contact with your wife back home or with your family or that sort of thing?*

**Allen Clark:** Oh yeah, I wrote all the time. My wife became, I wrote back highly positive letters to her. I did not want her to worry about me. I told her about my friends. I told her about the Vietnamese. I told her about the terrain. I told her about the weather, everything except the danger, and I was under a false name, so actually when I wrote her back my name was Captain Allen Copley, and I had a false detachment and so forth. Our cover was Civil Affairs Medical Action Teams, because I had a medic on my team, and so I wrote back highly laudatory letters and she began to think that I was changing my mind about getting out. My resignation was in before I went to Vietnam, so I expected to finish my four-year tour June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967, but I was extended for a year, so even after my one-year tour in Vietnam, I was to be reassigned for one more year before my regular Army commission would have been fulfilled, and I found out later I was going to be going to Fort Mead, Maryland. So anyway, that's the way she felt, and then she told me later that she had plans to divorce me as soon as I got back from Vietnam if I were to have made the decision to have stayed in the military.

*Tell us sir then, I know I guess it was in 1968 that you were wounded.*

**Allen Clark:** Well, '67.

*'67, yes sir.*

**Allen Clark:** Well, my commanding officer back in Saigon recognized the fact that I was under cover as an intelligence officer, and to have been an intelligence officer captured was bad enough for anybody, but especially intelligence people, and also my operation was shut down because the enemy battalions, at least one, was in the jungle near our camp, so none of my agents would go out and so I was blocked. He had heard about, of course I had sent him messages and he knew from intelligence everything was going on and those ambushes very near our camps, so he had planned on picking me up. He was going to get an airplane early morning Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1967, come up to Dak-to, and I was going to be picked up about 9:30 that morning. So the evening of June 16<sup>th</sup>, I was planning on being out of there the next day, the enemy had moved very, very quickly through the jungle and had set up mortar and rocket positions right across the Dak Poko River which was just south of our camp, and set up positions over there, and we had seen some movement believe it or not. It wasn't like they were surreptitious, but they began setting up their positions on this little plateau just south of our camp, just before dark, and we should have, I mean the camp commander should have called in an air strike had he thought it

was enemy, but we had 11 villages around us and we didn't want to attack friendly villagers that were just kind of out at night or something because they were always moving around, so no air strike was called on them, and we just kind of left it alone. Well as it turns out, the enemy battalion that had ambushed our two American patrols several days before were planning on an attack the next morning. They had massed their troops across the river and they were gonna begin that assault with a mortar rocket barrage. Now in a Special Forces camp, every two-hour shift an American is alive, an American is awake and on alert, an American walks the inner perimeter to make sure there's no infiltration by the Montanyard fighting force which is in the outer perimeter from the inner perimeter for the Special Forces. So my camp commander I guess was getting his last ounce of blood out of me you might say by having me on the 4 to 6 shift. So I was on the last shift of the morning. When that was finished, I would be finishing up, putting everything in a duffle bag because you don't have very much in a war zone, just stuffing everything in a duffle bag and getting ready to get on a plane at 9:30. Well at 4:30 I was writing a letter to my wife again, and the mortar attack starts. They attacked concurrently the Vietnamese regimental headquarters which was about three or four miles away, and attacked us, and I began in a little bit of a fog, but the executive officer of the camp handed me one of what we call a PRC-6, it's a small handheld radio, to communicate with the underground bunker. Everybody apparently went undercover except for me. We manned mortar pits. I began to literally grab men and send them to the three mortar pits to put counter battery fire on the enemy positions and to get flares in the air for the expected ground attack. So in the midst of doing that, I was literally out in the open with my rifle in my right hand, the radio in my left hand trying to spot the enemy firing position to direct fire, a mortar round landed to my left rear and knocked me forward. I dropped the radio, dropped my rifle, and fell on some concrete, and there was a little ditch there, drainage ditch, and I yelled out oh God, I'm dead, because that's what I assumed happened. I don't remember pain, but I remember the shock of the blast and knocking me forward, didn't know what had happened but knew something bad had happened. Two Army Special Forces sergeants came, put me on a litter, started to take me downstairs into a bunker. The medic, Sgt. Jimmy Hills, starts up out of the bunker. The other medic had been killed on that first patrol that had been ambushed, starts up, takes a piece of shrapnel in his left shoulder, gets knocked back into the bunker, and they eventually get me into the bunker. I think both the men were wounded that got me into the bunker. I was lucky not to get hit again. That medic, Jimmy Hills, began to take care of me. An Air Force major had been like in a Quonset hut right next to this bunker, and had taken a direct hit. I mean he literally as I have a vague recollection had a mortar fin in his head, sitting two feet away from me next to my cot, and I was on my stomach, still didn't know what had happened. During the course of the continuing attack, I remember saying some rather choice four letter words against the enemy and kind of still had my attitude and my spirit, and I told the medic, and this ended up on my Silver Star citation, that I was dying and for him to take care of the other people, and he said no captain, you're not dying, I'm going to take care of you. And I was his first combat casualty. And we joked later on that if I had known I was his first combat casualty I would have asked for second. Obviously that wasn't going to happen. So he took care of me, went out apparently under the barrage, and never received a decoration for it actually, with that piece of shrapnel in his shoulder to get plasma and morphine for me and brought it back and he saved my life. I lost a significant amount of blood but he saved my life. I was put on a Medivac sometime early that morning after the attack and apparently because of our counter battery firing, especially because an Air Force plane came up from Plaku very quickly, they had them on alert all the time, and put Gatling gun fire from the side of a C-20 – I don't know what it was – but an Air Force plane with Gatling guns from the Civil War era if you can believe that were still being used 100 years later, on the side of the plane and put down very heavy suppressing fire on the enemy positions, which dissuaded their ground attack. So the ground attack never happened. Had the ground attack happened, we

would have taken significant casualties and I probably would have died. But the Medivac choppers came in pretty quick. I was taken out, obviously the last contact I had with that camp. My commanding officer ended up at the camp at 9:30 and then Allen's gone, Allen's down in Plaku, so that was Saturday morning. I wake up Sunday night in the hospital. I hadn't seen my CO yet. He wasn't there. Woke up and I was in what's called a MASH, you know, the MASH TV program, of course, we were in a MASH in Plaku, and we were all side by side in beds and I looked down and got a sheet up to my neck and there are no toes on the left. My left leg had been traumatically amputated. There was nothing left of my left leg after the mortar hit, and my right leg was broken in five places as the medical report indicates, so I had a hip cast from my hip all the way down to my toes. I looked down there and of course I was totally grogged out, you know, groggy, morphine'd out, so I really didn't know what was going on, but I was just in a fog. But I didn't panic or anything. An Army captain that was in intelligence, maybe in my unit, I don't recall his name, came and wrote a letter for me to my wife's father here in Dallas. My wife had stayed with her parents in Dallas while she went to SMU and finished her college education while I was gone, and I didn't want her to get a direct letter, but I wrote it to him to tell her, and then I wrote my father to tell my mother. So I mean I have copies of those letters. My father-in-law and my father kept the letters and I put them in the book that I've written, that Wounded Soldier, Healing Warrior, and I was there for a day or two, that would be the 18<sup>th</sup> or the 19<sup>th</sup>. I was moved to Qui Nhon on the east coast of Vietnam on what's called a Medivac flight, and I woke up on June 20<sup>th</sup> in Qui Nhon. It was my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, and I still have a very distinct recollection that what to me was a very, very beautiful blond Army nurse was at my bed side and I sure wanted a kiss for my birthday, so I told her it was my birthday and she kissed me, and then we moved onto Clark Air Force Base which is now closed in the Philippines, and then on to Hawaii and then San Francisco and then down to Brook Army Hospital. So I came back to Brook within seven days which is a real miracle because typically they send you to Japan, and my wife actually, the Wednesday of that week, the letter had not arrived yet to the father-in-law, so my wife is studying and is called to the door and there was a telegram there, and the man giving her the telegram indicating my wounds, this always gets very emotional what she went through, he asked her is there anyone here with you? Her mother was. She had to be put under sedation. I showed up Saturday in San Antonio and she and her mother came down and she was with me for the rest of the time in the hospital for 15 months, and I began my rehabilitation.

*I know sir in your book your subtitle says "A personal story of a Vietnam veteran who lost his legs but found his soul. I just wonder if you could share with us sir a little bit about that.*

**Allen Clark:** Yeah, well my right leg was taken off three days after I came back, so ten days after the wounding, I was a double amputee below both legs. I began being treated by a psychiatrist very quickly because my post traumatic stress disorder began to kick in and I had individual psychotherapy to a limited degree. After eight months, I just was panicking about my life. I was angry at the Army, I was sad about what had happened to me, wondering about what I was gonna do with my life, how I was gonna make a living. I had no idea about the benefits, that I'd be getting some money and trying to plan my life. I went without sleep for four days and so I cracked, and I went to \_\_\_ psychiatric ward at Brook General Hospital for 14 weeks, which was agonizing. I mean I was in a fog. They put me under sleeping. I probably slept for 48 hours straight, woke up, and I had to be with all these guys down there in that psychiatric ward. The majority of them amazingly enough were not so much combat vets as people that were alcoholics or they had gotten on drugs and continued on drugs, that couldn't take the pressure of basic training, and they cracked, or they were schizophrenics or whatever the case may be. They were all just kind of piled in there together and out of about 40 patients, I think only two of us were combat vets amazingly enough. But I had to see a psychiatrist a couple of times a week for

individual psychotherapy, heavy drugs, and then the group psychiatry sessions. So I worked that out for 14 weeks and then began to ease out, get my legs fitted, and leave to go to SMU for my masters' degree. When you get severely wounded, the government pays for the vocational rehabilitation, so they paid for an MBA program, Master of Business Administration at SMU for me. My wife became a teacher and so I went to SMU from '68 to '70 and got an MBA, and I didn't go to church or anything, and just had to continue to see a psychiatrist until about '73 or '74, and it was a very, very hard years for my wife, Jackie, and me. I mean here I am rebuilding my life, trying to recover, and get confidence in myself again, build up what I called an attitude which I had as an officer, you know, self confident, believed I could do anything, and had my whole life ahead of me even though it was gonna be a civilian life back in Dallas, Texas, and having to recover myself spiritually and emotionally and soulfully. My first job right after graduate school was with Ross Perot, and I was hired as his personal financial assistant, and I'll get back to the spiritual thing, but this is an important interesting factor. Ross Perot hired me as his personal financial assistant in the summer of 1970, and so I was going to be working on his investments, etc., and I put myself under pressure again and cracked. So I had to go to a hospital for a week, and back under the care, significant care with heavy, heavy antidepressants with a psychiatrist which I had to see for another three years. In 1973, the POW's were released and I was selected to be the wounded in action honoree at a Cotton Bowl ceremony that was going to honor all the returning POW's. So I was in an open car that was a convertible that went around the Cotton Bowl grounds with the two senior ranking POW's that were released, and then Lieutenant General Flynn and then a Navy, I think maybe Stockdale who became vice presidential candidate for Ross Perot and had the Medal of Honor, and then a family of a killed in action, and then I represented all the wounded in action for the Vietnam War in that ceremony, and I didn't crack again, but it was very, very emotional for me, and I left work for a week. But I had gone to work at Republic Bank in Dallas because I couldn't stand the pressure with Ross Perot, but he was very kind and kept me on the payroll for a few weeks and we stayed in contact, and as you know from the book, he did the forward for my book. So for the next three or four years, I saw a psychiatrist again and just still kind of muddling through life, trying, we had one child and my wife lost a child, aborted a child back when I was in New York, with all that pressure on her, she lost a child, and she didn't have an abortion, she just lost a child due to the pressure. We had another child in '71 and another in '74, but when I had my first child I decided I better start going to church. So I went to church and I had obviously been a very gung ho, young American patriot, and I had believed in Jesus Christ as Savior as a teenager. So I had my initial faith walk taken care of as defined by believing I was going to go to heaven and that I would live for eternity because I believed in that Calvary gospel message of the death of Jesus on the cross for me, but I really didn't have what I call Jesus as Lord of my life to direct my life, to pray and know about prayer, to have confidence and faith that my Lord would take care of me, but I went to church and I heard a sermon about '73 or '74 from my pastor here in Dallas that talked about the great eternal struggle of good versus evil, for all mankind, God versus the devil, and there was an American flag there, and I looked over at that flag and I said you know, here I almost died for "that flag" and what it represents in our country, but I have never even considered giving my life and understanding the spiritual message of what the bible's about and what my Christianity is about and what taking my salvation message into the Lordship range. So I began getting in a bible study and studying the bible, learning about prayer, learning about spiritual warfare, the good versus evil, Satan versus the devil, and all of these thing relate to really beginning a walk of faith that's mature. So I began that in the middle 70s, and 35 years later, I mean here I am. I go to bases and talk on post traumatic stress disorder to the troops and talk about my faith and how I was healed from post traumatic stress disorder. In 35 years I haven't had to have any pills, no psychotherapy, and just my faith walk is what healed me from my PTSD.

*And you have a web site now too, right?*

**Allen Clark:** Yeah, it's called CombatFaith.com. It's been going for about five years, and it has extensive anecdotes from all the wars. In other words, I had always felt that I wanted to have a web site that expresses a practical faith-based approach to PTSD that's different and outside and separate from pills, psychotherapy, the Vet Center, get togethers, and the PTSD clinics, and I talked to a VA man who had been in a PTSD clinic for about 20 years and treated vets from all the wars, and I asked him to give me the anecdotes that he had heard beginning with World War II from what veterans needed help for and healing. So I took each one of those anecdotes and I put 'em on the web site with a faith-based approach. In other words, if they walked into my room and I could speak about Jesus and Our Lord God to them, that this is what I would take in a faith-based approach to help them with an anecdote, which doesn't happen in the VA system or with private psychiatrists. So that's what I have on there. I have my own healing story. I have an awful lot of a spiritual message, spiritual dimension of the things that made sense for me and have worked for me and have helped others heal from PTSD.

*Well I'm sure and I imagine too with today's returning wounded warriors that your experience and your message has got to be immensely helpful to them.*

**Allen Clark:** Well, you know it has been. I just yesterday got about a ten-paragraph message from an Army Vietnam veteran up in Ohio that got hold of my book. He wrote me about everything about the book and how we had comparable experiences, and how he'd also been through a divorce. By the way, my wife and I divorced in 1994 after 30 years of marriage, and I'm remarried now. But he talked about that and that different things were comparable to his life and how he was trying to get his life together and so forth, and be a religious man. He was on his third marriage and so forth, as many people that suffer from the war, etc., but he told me how much my book meant to him.

*That's great, yes sir. And I know too, because I saw the clip on your web site of your interview when you were on Larry King Live, and had mentioned that you had gotten an award from President Reagan at the White House and I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about that.*

**Allen Clark:** Yeah, I guess it was about, it was early, well it was 1984. I had had a friend that worked with me when I worked for Governor Clements. I was in Austin from 1978 to 1981. I was special assistant for administration to Governor Bill Clements, the first Republican governor, as reconstruction. And I was veterans liaison, liaison to the military, the National Guard, etc., etc., and someone on that staff had gone to President Reagan's staff and had nominated me to be honored during Hispanic Week I think it was, Hispanic American month. So I went up there in September of 1984 and was honored in the, let me see, it would have been up there in one of those big rooms at the White House –

*The East Room -*

**Allen Clark:** And President Reagan honored me and mentioned me in his speech, and he came by and shook my hand of course, and I came back and I was able to tell my father about that. My father died two days later. It was kind of interesting how this little old guy, raised by somebody that was in a broken family from Mission, Texas, her name was Amaria dela Fuente, and she lived in the south part of Mission, because back in those days, 20s and 30s, we had

segregation in Texas, and she spoke Spanish before she spoke English, and my father being an orphan and so forth, that the product of that marriage and that life and the integrity and the ethics and morality with which they brought me up and the value system was able to be at a point where the governor of Texas would ask me to be his special assistant, and eventually President Reagan, I mean President George H.W. Bush had me senior political appointee at the National VA, was able to be at a point where I would be honored by the President of the United States was a pretty fantastic journey after as low as I'd gotten after my wounds.

*Absolutely, yes sir. And I know too, you also ran for statewide office in Texas in 1982, if you maybe could tell us a little bit about that.*

**Allen Clark:** Yeah, I was in Midland, Texas, working for an oil man and in 1983, I'm sorry, I lose track of these dates, 1981, Ann Richards was the Democratic nominee for treasurer and the Republican Party didn't really have a viable candidate up to run against her, and Governor Clements called me in Midland, and amazingly enough, I had just had lunch with an oil man named George W. Bush that day, an hour and a half lunch with him in Midland, and a very delightful, pleasant lunch with him, just wonderful. He had gone to the rival prep school to my school. He'd gone to Phillips Andover Academy in Massachusetts, and so we talked a lot and had a great time. Came back and Governor Clements asked me to be on the ticket, Republican ticket to run for treasurer, and so I did go on that ticket and lost to her in that race in 1982.

*Was that a good experience though, I mean putting yourself out there and running for office?*

**Allen Clark:** Oh yeah, it was a wonderful experience. I met a lot of wonderful people in the state of Texas. As it turns out, I did not go into debt for that political race which is a major accomplishment obviously. I met a lot of people and it kind of springboarded me into being in real estate investments. I knew a lot of people and I set up an investment operation to buy and manage rental properties, apartment buildings in San Antonio.

*Well sir, I know we've taken well over an hour on our interview, but it's been a real honor for me, and of course I think you know Commissioner Patterson is a veteran like myself, a lot of people at the Land Office are veterans, but even those that aren't are very appreciative of your service and your sacrifice for our nation and our hope with this program is that we're able to save these interviews for posterity, that we can put these in our archives and that future generations can hear 'em. I don't know if you know or not, but at the Land Office, we have documents that go back to before Texas was even a state. They have Spanish Land Grants here, and there's Stephen F. Austin's original Rehistro, and there's the paperwork that was given to Davy Crockett's widow so that she could get land here in Texas after the war was fought. And so our goal is that these things, these interviews will be kept in these archives for hundreds of years as well.*

**Allen Clark:** Well I appreciate that James, and I think that my enduring legacy will be in the archives of the minds and souls of the men and women who might go to that [www.CombatFaith.com](http://www.CombatFaith.com). They can be healed from their war experiences and the combat operating stresses and people wherever, Texas and outside the state, would be able to utilize my experiences and my healing process from a faith-based angle to help them, because that's all that I really care about. I mean I know I'm gonna be for eternity, and I just hope that my legacy which of course is incorporated in these wonderful records that the land commissioner is keeping for this through this effort will accrue to the benefit of others if they can hear this and appropriate what I've put on that web site.

*Yes sir, well I tell you sir, we really do appreciate it. It's been an honor, and like I mentioned before, we'll get this interview put on disk pretty soon and sent to you and you have my information, so if there's ever anything you need, feel free to give me a call, but we'll be in touch again soon, sir, once we get these disks made we'll have them on the way.*

**Allen Clark:** Well thank you, and give the land commissioner my very best regards and personal greetings, please.

*Yes sir, thank you very much. We'll talk to you soon.*

**Allen Clark:** OK, bye.

*[End of recording]*